

### **Background: US Soldier Befriends Stray Pup on Deployment**

US veteran Amjad “AJ” Kirrish (AM-JAD KERR-ISH) befriended a young stray dog during his combat tour in the Middle East. The dog soon became the joy of the US military base, lifting the spirits of all personnel. Mr. Kirrish named the dog Harley and reached out to an organization called Paws of War for assistance in adopting her. Based on Long Island, Paws of War has been matching rescue dogs with US veterans experiencing the emotional effects of war since 2014. Paws of War arranged the requisite veterinary examination, paperwork, and flight details for Harley to travel from Jordan to Mr. Kirrish in California with a layover at JFK.

### **Problem: CDC Denial due to Incomplete Paperwork**

On August 24th, Harley arrived at JFK from Amman, Jordan. CDC authorities at JFK denied Harley entry, citing possible exposure to rabies and invalid vaccination paperwork at the time of arrival. Due to a small clerical error, the veterinarian’s name, address, and contact information was omitted from the initial vaccination history, which, according to prior CDC correspondence, called into question the legitimacy of the document. On August 25th, Paws of War submitted an appeal, including a corrected document from the administering veterinarian. Harley did indeed receive all required vaccines in Jordan. Paws of War included this information, but CDC denied the appeal on the grounds that any paperwork that did not arrive with Harley at JFK was invalid.

Upon a closer review of Harley’s paperwork, Riley noticed some discrepancies:

- The date of vaccination on the original puppy passport is different from the corrected certificate included in the Paws of War appeal.
- The original vaccination history was signed and stamped by a different veterinarian from a different practice than the individual who signed corrected document.

Amanda and Riley spoke with Robert Misseri, a representative from Paws of War, to find an explanation for these discrepancies. Mr. Misseri was not able to do so, but offered to ascertain any necessary documents, if only CDC would cooperate and advise them. Regrettably, if CDC does not rescind its denial, JFK will send Harley back to Jordan, where she will likely be euthanized.

A second dog, which is physically crippled, accompanied Harley on the flight from Jordan to JFK. This crippled dog was also initially denied entry, with CDC again citing incomplete paperwork. Congressman Suozzi’s office worked with CDC to save this dog and had a much easier time doing so, as CDC has legal restrictions that prohibit sending physically crippled dogs on international flights.

### **Solution: Letter to CDC Director from LI Delegation**

Paperwork discrepancies aside, CDC has not provided one good reason why they cannot cooperate and save this dog for a US veteran. Before drafting the letter, Tom and Riley attempted to work with a CDC congressional liaison, who was not particularly helpful. On Tuesday afternoon, Tom sent the letter, cosigned by all member of the Long Island delegation, to CDC Director Robert Redfield and HHS Secretary Alex Azar, and Stuart issued a press release. We’re hoping that this will pressure CDC and HHS to overturn their decision and save Harley’s life.



U.S. REPRESENTATIVE  
New York's Fourth District **Kathleen Rice**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 1, 2020

**CONTACT:**

Stuart Malec (Rice) – 860-508-8554

**Kathleen Rice, Long Island Delegation Demand Immediate CDC  
Intervention to Prevent Death of Veteran's Service Dog**

*Without intervention, Harley, a one-year-old service dog, will be sent back to Jordan over a minor paperwork mistake and will likely be euthanized once there*

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Representatives Kathleen Rice (NY-04), Peter King (NY-02), Gregory Meeks (NY-05), Lee Zeldin (NY-01), and Tom Suozzi (NY-03) sent a letter to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield calling for urgent intervention to save the life of an American veteran's service dog. The one-year old puppy, Harley, was brought to the United States from Jordan by [Paws of War](#), a Long Island-based organization that matches rescue dogs with American veterans experiencing the emotional effects of war.

Harley arrived at JFK International Airport from Amman, Jordan on August 24. CDC authorities at JFK denied Harley entry, citing invalid vaccination paperwork at the time of arrival. However, the invalid paperwork was only the result of a minor paperwork mistake, which has since been corrected in an appeal by Paws of War. Nonetheless, CDC has denied the appeal and Harley is scheduled to be sent back to Jordan any day, where she will almost certainly be euthanized.

The full text of the letter can be found below:

*Director Robert R. Redfield  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329*

*Dear Director Redfield,*

*We write to you today regarding a dog brought to this country from Jordan by Paws of War, an organization that matches rescue dogs with American veterans experiencing the emotional effects of war. On August 24th, a young dog named Harley arrived at JFK International Airport from Amman, Jordan. CDC authorities at JFK denied Harley entry, citing possible exposure to rabies and invalid vaccination paperwork at the time of arrival.*

*On August 25th, Paws of War submitted an appeal, including a corrected document from the administering veterinarian. Harley, a one-year-old puppy, did indeed receive a thorough examination and all required vaccines from Dr. Irina Dymova, a veterinarian in Jordan. Due to a small clerical error, the veterinarian's name, address, and contact information was omitted from the initial vaccination history, which, according to prior CDC correspondence, called into question the legitimacy of the document. Paws of War included this information with their appeal, but CDC denied the appeal on the grounds that any paperwork that did not arrive with Harley at JFK was invalid.*

*The veteran who adopted Harley met her during a combat tour in the Middle East. Harley was the joy of the military base and quickly formed a strong bond with this young soldier. Now, the soldier and his wife wait anxiously as they try to secure Harley's return home. If Harley is sent back to Jordan, she will almost certainly will be euthanized. Paws of War is happy to provide any clarifying documentation that the CDC deems necessary. Additionally, they are willing to organize for a veterinarian to administer an additional rabies vaccine in airport quarantine, just to be safe. As Harley was designated to be a companion to an American veteran and given her likely death without your intervention, we ask that you strongly consider making an exception for Harley so that she may continue onto her new home.*

*Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.*

*Sincerely,*

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